But watch out, anyway. Good night, little playmates. Wake me up at 4.15."

That was all of the conversation for seventy-two miles.

It was dawn when Buffum drove again. He was silent; he was concentrated on keeping the speedometer just two miles higher than seemed safe. But once a mile or so, on straight stretches, he glanced with weary happiness at the morning meadows, at shimmering tapestry of grass and young wheat, and caught half a note of the song of the meadow lark. His mouth, so grimly tight in dangerous places, rose at the corners.

Toward noon, as Buffum was approaching the village of Apogee, Ia., the smooth blaring of the motor was interrupted by a noise as though the engine was flying to pieces.

He yanked at the switch; before the car had quite halted, Roy and he had tumbled out at opposite sides, were running forward to lift the hood. The fan guard, a heavy wire soldered on the radiator, had worked loose and bent a fan blade, which had ripped out a handful of honeycomb. The inside of the radiator looked as though it had been hacked with a dull knife. The water was cascading out.

Buffum speculated: "Apogee next town? Can't get radiator there. None nearer 'n Clinton. Get this soldered. Here! You!"

The "Here! You!" was directed at the driver of an ancient roadster. "Got to hustle this boat into next town. Want you to haul me in."

Roy Bender had already snatched a towrope from the back of the racing car, was fastening it to the front axle of the Mallard, the rear of the roadster.

Buffum gave no time for disputes. "I'm J. T. Buffum. Racin' 'cross continent. Here's $10. Want your machine ten minutes. I'll drive." He had crowded into the seat. Already, with Roy steering the Mallard, they were headed for Apogee.

A shouting crowd ran out from house and store. Buffum slowly looked them over. Of a man in corduroy trousers and khaki shirt, who had plumped out of a garage, he demanded, "Who's the best solderer in town?"

"I am. Good as anybody in Iowa!"

"Now, wait! Know who I am?"

"Sure. You're Buffum."

"My radiator is shot to thunder. Got to be soldered. I want six hours' work done in one hour, or less. How about the hardware store? Isn't there a solderer there that's even better than you?"

"Yes, I guess maybe old Frank Dieters is."

"Get him and get the other good men, and get busy. One of you work on each side. Roy Bender, here, will boss you." Already Roy was taking down the radiator. "One hour, remember. Hurry! Plenty of money in it"——

"Oh, we don't care anything about the money!"

"Thanks, old man. Well, I might as well grab a little sleep. Where'll I get a long distance connection?" he yawned.

"Across the street, at Mrs. Rivers's. Be less noise there than in the garage, I guess."

OVER the way was a house that was a large square box with an octagonal cupola on the mansard roof. It was set back in a yard of rough grass and old crab-apple trees. At the gate were a small-ish, severe woman in spectacles and apron, and a girl of twenty-five or six. Buffum looked at the girl twice and tried to make out what it was that distinguished her from all the other women in the crowd that had come pushing and giggling to see the famous car.

She was sharply individualized. It was not that she was tall and blazing. She was slight—and delicate as a dry-point etching. Her chin was precise though soft; she had a Roman nose, a feminized charming version of the Roman nose. The thing that made her distinctive, Buffum reflected, was her poise. The girl by the gate was as quietly aloof as the small, cold moon of winter.

He plodded across the road. He hesitated before speaking.

"I hope there hasn't been an accident," she murmured to him.

"No, just a small repair."

"But why does every one seem so much concerned?"

"Why, it's—it's—I'm J. T. Buffum."

"Mr.—uh—Buffum?"

"I reckon you have never heard of me."

"Why, uh—should I have?" Her eyes were serious, regretful at discourtesy.

"No. You shouldn't. I just mean—. Motor fans usually have. I'm a racer. I m driving from San Francisco to New York."

"I RECKON YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD OF ME."
"WHY, UH—SHOULD I HAVE?"

"Really? It will take you—ten days?"

"Four to five days."

"In two days you will be in the East? See the—ocean, the art galleries? Oh!"

In her voice was wistfulness. Her eyes saw far-off things. But they came back to Apogee, Ia., and to the big, dusty mafi in leather, with a penitent: "I'm ashamed not to have heard of you, but I—we haven't a car. I hope they will make your repairs quickly. May mother and I give you a glass of milk or something?"

"I'd be glad if you'd let me use your telephone. So noisy, at"——

"Of course! Mother, this is Mr. Buffum, who is driving across the country. Oh—my name is Aurilla Rivers."

Buffum awkwardly tried to bow in two directions at once. Then he followed Aurilla Rivers's slender back. He noticed how smooth were her shoulder blades. They were neither jagged nor wadded. It seemed to him that the blue silk of her waist took life from the warm and eager flesh beneath. To her studied serenity she had not lost her youth.

As he drew away from the prying crowd and the sound of hasty hammers and wrenches, he was conscious of clinging peace. The brick of the walk was worn to a soft rose, shaded by gently moving branches of lilac bushes. At the end was a wild grape arbor, and an ancient bench. The arbor was shadowy, and full of the feeling of long and tranquil years. In this land of new houses and new red barns and blazing miles of wheat, it seemed mysterious with antiquity.

And on the doorstep was the bleached vertebra of a whale. Buffum was confused. He travelled so much and so swiftly that he always had to stop to think whether he was East or West, and now. Yes, this was Iowa. Of course. But that vertebra belonged to New England.

And to New England belonged the conch shell and the mahogany table in the wide hall, with its strip of rag carpet, down which Miss Rivers led him to the telephone—an old-fashioned wall instrument. Buffum noticed that Miss Rivers conscientiously disappeared through the wide door at the end of the hall into a garden of pinks and pansies and sweet william.

"Please get me long distance."

"I'm long distance and short distance and"——

"All right. This is Buffum, the transcontinental racer. I want to talk to Detroit, Mich.—Mallard Motor Company—office of the President."

HE waited ten minutes. He sat on the edge of a William and Mary chair, and felt obese, clumsy, extremely dirty. He ventured off his chair—disapproving of the thunder of his footsteps—and stood in the doorway of a room, which, he fancied, contained all the Rivers treasures. The corner by the bow window seemed to be a shrine. Above a genuine antediluvian haircloth sofa were three pictures: In the centre was a rather good painting of a man who was the very spirit of 1850 in New England—burnsides, grim, white forehead, Roman nose, prim triangle of shirt-front. On the right was a water color of a house, white-doored, narrow-eaved, small-windowed, standing out against gray sand and blue water, with a moored motor dory beyond. On the woodshed ell of the pictured house was nailed up the name-board of a ship—the Penninah Sparrow.

On the left of the portrait was a fairly recent enlarged photograph of a man somewhat like the gran'ther of 1850, so far as Romanness of nose went, but weaker and more pompous, a handsome old buck, with a pretentious broad eyeglass ribbon, and hair that must have been silvery over a face that must have been deep-flushed.

By the sofa was a marble-topped stand, on which were sweet peas surely fresh that day.

Then central called, and Buffum was talking to the President of the Mallard Motor Company, who for two days and nights had sat by the ticker, watching his flashing progress.

"Hello, chief. Buffum speaking. Held up for about one hour. Apogee, Ia. Think I can make it up. But better move the schedule up through Illinois and Indiana. Huh? Radiator leak. 'By!"

He inquired the amount of toll, and rambled out to the garden. He had to hurry away, of course, and get some sleep, but it would be good for him to see Aurilla Rivers again, to take with him the memory of her cool resoluteness. She was coming toward him. He meekly followed her back toward the hall, to the front steps. There he halted her. He would see quite enough of Roy Bender and the car before he reached New York.

"Please sit down here a moment and tell me"——

"Yes?"

"Oh, about the country around here, and uh—oh! I owe you for the telephone call."

"Please! It's nothing."

"But it's something. It's $2.95."

"For a telephone call?"

He caught her hand and pressed the money into it. She plumped down on the steps, and he discreetly lowered his bulk beside her. She turned on him, blazing:

"You infuriate me! You do the things I've always wanted to—sweep across big distances, command men, have power. I suppose it's the old Yankee shipmasters coming out in me."

"Miss Rivers, I noticed a portrait in there. It seemed to me that the picture and the old sofa made a kind of shrine. And the fresh flowers."

She stared a little before she said:

"Yes. It is a shrine. But you're the first one that ever guessed. How did you"——

"I don't know. I suppose it's because I went through some California missions a few days ago. Tell me about the people in the pictures."

"You wouldn't—oh, some day, perhaps."

"Some day! Now, you see here, child! Do you realize that in about forty minutes I'll be kiting out of here at seventy miles an hour? Imagine that I've met you a couple of times in the bank or the post office, and finally after about six months I've called here and told your mother I like pansies. All right. All that is over. Now, who are you, Aurilla Rivers? Who and what and why and how and when?"

She smiled. She nodded. She told.

SHE was a school teacher now, but before her father had died—well, the enlarged photograph in there was her father, Bradley Rivers, pioneer lawyer of Apogee. He had come out from Cape Cod as a boy. The side-whiskered man of the central portrait was her grandfather, Capt. Zenas Rivers of West Harlepool, on the Cape. The house in the picture was the Rivers mansion, birthplace of her father, of her grandfather and his

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